



We are a faith-filled environment providing a place for children to grow and achieve their greatest potential.

Family Handbook 2024-2025

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Section I – Our School



Dr. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori, the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School, became a doctor in 1896. Her first post was in the university's Psychiatric Clinic.

In 1899, Montessori became director of the State Orthophrenic School, where her work with the developmentally delayed was so successful that the majority of her students were able to pass the state education exams. While other people exclaimed over this phenomenal success, Montessori pondered its implication for typically developing children. This reflection led her to devote her life to education.

Montessori opened her first Casa dei Bambini (Children's House) in 1907, applying to children of normal intelligence the methods and materials she had developed for special needs children. She also spent a great deal of time observing and meditating on what children did with her materials—what brought out their best learning and their greatest enthusiasm.

As a result of Montessori's achievements at the Casa dei Bambini, her method spread rapidly. By 1915, over 100 Montessori schools had opened in America, and many more had opened in the rest of the world. Adapted from Montessori, *Her Life and Work*, by E.M. Standing

The beginning of something awesome...

Living Hope Montessori is a ministry of Cornerstone Church, Natchez. It was birthed out of a great community need for a form of education that meets each child where they are developmentally, while giving them a faith-filled environment where they can thrive.

This hands-on approach to learning, focuses on the whole child, and the Montessori environment itself has successfully brought about incredible results in children for over 100 years. It is our joy to bring this life changing ministry to the Miss-Lou.

Living Hope Montessori, a place where children thrive.

Living Hope Montessori: A Ministry of Cornerstone Church

Our Vision:

To develop a community of learning where children can thrive.

Our Mission:

To offer children the opportunity to experience a faith-filled, Montessori environment where they can grow and achieve their greatest potential.

Our Values

To support the vision and mission of our school:

- We believe the education of a child is the shared responsibility of parents, teachers and the child.
- We believe in a united responsibility for developing independence in academic, social, and emotional skills.
- We believe that offering a learning environment centered in Christ and aligned with Montessori philosophy will help develop future public servants who will make a difference in our community.
- We believe that it is an honor to serve one another, and we want this honor to show through our words and actions.

Code of Conduct for Parents and Students

LHM is founded on the Montessori ideals of the expectation that every person deserves respect. We expect parents/guardians, students, visitors, and staff to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward each other. A Code of Conduct gives clarity to behaviors that are expected of adults and children within our community. Adherence to a Code of Conduct ensures that everyone will be respected.

- Parents/guardians, students, visitors, and staff must work together in a cooperative and friendly manner for the benefit of the children.
- All school/classroom rules will be followed to ensure consistency.
- Parents will convey to their children a supportive attitude toward education and the school.
- All parents/guardians, students, visitors and staff in our school community should be treated with respect. This includes that no abusive behaviors either via written communication, language, or attitudes shall occur towards anyone who is a parent/guardian, student, visitor, or staff member will be considered acceptable by LHM. Parents/guardians will be asked to leave the school if necessary.
- Parents will set a good example in your own speech and behavior to demonstrate respect towards all parents, students, visitors, and staff.
- If parents have a concern, respectfully first approach your child's teacher, then if needed the principal. Following these steps is necessary to communicate in good faith to help resolve any issue.

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment, the school cannot tolerate parents/guardians, students, visitors, or staff exhibiting the following:

- Disruptive behavior and/or harassment of any kind which damages or interferes with the operations of any area of the school or damages school property.
- Using loud, threatening, or offensive language, cursing or displaying temper.
- Any abusive, harassing, or threatening email or text/voicemail/phone message or other written communication.
- Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the students, visitors, parents, or staff at the school. This includes but is not limited to in person or via any digital forum such as Facebook or other social media sites and business directory listings. Do not use a picture of another child, parent, or staff without their permission in social media or any other kind of media.
- Any emotional abuse, physical aggression, intimidation, or threatening behaviors of any type towards another adult or child.
- Approaching someone else's child or another parent in order to discuss with them or chastise them because of the actions of one child towards another child.

Section II - Enrollment

Admissions

Acceptance into Living Hope Montessori School is given with much thought and care. Our responsibility is to ensure that each child accepted and enrolled at LHM has an opportunity to reach their fullest potential so they can flourish in the environment socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy – LHM does not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin in administration of its admissions policies.

Special Needs – Children with special needs will be addressed on an individual basis as they apply. Due to the small size of our school, we do not currently have separate classrooms or extra teachers and assistants dedicated to special needs students. Therefore, they must receive instruction in the same classroom as other students and be able to fit within the Montessori model of teaching. The administrator and teachers will meet to determine if a student's special needs can be met at our school.

Application Process for New Families

Applications are accepted throughout the year. Interested families can request additional information by contacting the school through email or on our website. Guidelines for application are listed below.

1. **Request a Tour.** Please request a tour online or call the school at (318) 336-4253 to set up an appointment. The 30- to 45-minute tours are generally scheduled Monday-Friday between 3:15 – 4:30 p.m.
2. **Submit an [application](#) online.**
3. **Observation Visit.** After receiving the application, an observation visit will be scheduled for the child to spend time (approximately a half hour) in the classroom working with the teacher and materials. This is an opportunity for the teacher and the parents to observe how a Montessori classroom will fit the child's learning needs.
4. **Parent Interview.** The principal will conduct a brief interview with parents and will discuss details of enrollment and to share more about the ministry and educational aspects of the program.
5. **Application Review.** It is our goal to ensure that LHM is a good match for each child/family applying. The admissions committee will make the final decision regarding acceptance of the application and admission to LHM. LHM reserves the right to accept enrollment in our program to keep balance of age, sex, and Montessori experience in mind. All students who are accepted into our program are enrolled on a provisional basis for two months. It is possible that a child will not adjust or be suited for the Montessori environment. In that case, our admissions committee along with the parents will meet to review the child's engagement and success in the environment. This may result in the withdrawal of the student from LHM.
6. **Completing Enrollment and Tuition Agreement.** Upon enrollment acceptance, parents will need to complete all parental consent forms and a tuition agreement. They will notify the office of the preferred payment plan (pay in full or over 10 months).
Enrollment will not be considered complete until all forms are submitted and registration fees have been paid.

The following documents (**Forms and Records**) must be presented and filed prior to the first day your child attends class:

- Official state-issued birth certificate
- Social Security card
- Documentation of current immunization records for child's age at the time of enrollment or signed Immunization waiver
- Parental Consent Forms

- Transfer students **must** also supply this school with a copy of transcripts

To maximize instructional experiences for all students, it is paramount that the parents disclose to Teachers/Staff any concerns about the child which may impede his/her learning, i.e., identified learning disabilities or special needs, recent traumas, medical issues, behavioral issues, etc.

Waiting Pool

If a student applies for a program that is full or if the child is not yet old enough to attend, they will be placed in a waiting pool for that program. LHM reserves the right, at their sole discretion, to balance program needs, student/staff ratios, and consider previous Montessori experience. If all factors are equal, preference will be given to a student who has other siblings enrolled in our program. After consideration of these determining factors, availability will be based on the date of initial application.

Returning Family Enrollment

The beginning of February marks the start of the re-enrollment process for current students at LHM. Current families will have until March 1 to complete their re-enrollment contract for the following school year.

Withdrawals

When a child is voluntarily withdrawn from the school, there is no refund for registration, supply fees, or tuition payments. Records of current scholastic progress can be forwarded to the next school.

Forcible Withdrawal Policy

The goal of Living Hope Montessori is that every student who enrolls in the school has a successful and rewarding academic experience. However, when the behavior of any student or family is counterproductive to this mission, dismissal may occur. For the purpose of this policy, Forcible Withdrawal is defined as the termination of academic services.

Some of the grounds for recommending a hearing for Forcible Withdrawal are as follows:

1. A child's lack of effort or lack of academic/developmental progress despite reasonable accommodations.
2. Lack of cooperation by parents in addressing academic or behavior problems of their children.
3. Threats by a student or family to another student, teacher, or staff member.
4. Continued negative conduct by a student, i.e., disrespect of authority, obscene gestures and language.
5. Failure to meet or breach of tuition requirements as stated in the Financial Agreement.

6. Failure by parents to notify school of medical issues that might compromise the health of other students and staff members. Proof of medical services must be provided by parents prior to the student returning to school.

In the event that a child is not adequately progressing in the classroom, the following steps will be taken:

1. The classroom teacher will consult with the principal and ask for the principal to observe the child in the classroom setting.
2. The principal will give guidance and make recommendations to the classroom teacher regarding appropriate interventions and inform the parents of the steps being taken in the classroom to help the child succeed.
3. If progress is not observed according to the classroom teacher's anecdotal notes/ data, the principal will observe the interventions in action and make recommendations for continuing the intervention or trying other options.
4. If parents seek professional evaluations with recommended interventions, we ask that evaluation and interventions be shared with the teachers by the parents.
5. A trial period during which progress is expected will be established. Written documentation of expectations during the trial period will be provided to both the parents and the teachers by the principal. At the end of the trial period, the parents, teachers, and Principal will schedule a follow-up conference.
6. The child will be withdrawn from the school if the principal and teacher believe that continued service is not in the best interest of the child or the program, or that the child cannot be reasonably accommodated.

Tuition and Fees for 2024-2025

Tuition

Tuition may be paid in full annually or monthly. Tuition is based on a ten-month school year. The first monthly payment is due August 1, and the last monthly payment is due May 1. There is no tuition reduction for holidays, school breaks, sicknesses, absences, or natural disasters. Invoices will be sent in advance through our QuickBooks billing system via email. Students who enter school after the beginning of the month are required to pay the full month's tuition. Half-day is only available to 3-year-old students and students with special needs.

Tuition costs for our 2024-2025 school year

Full Day (8:00 AM – 3:00 PM) - \$5150

Half Day (8:00 AM -12:00 PM) - \$4150

Fees

Non-refundable Application Fee (new enrollments only): \$25 per child

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| Annual Registration Fee (due June 1, 2024): | \$200 |
| Technology/Workbook Fee (due July 1, 2024): (Elementary Only) | \$100 - 1st child |

Delinquent Accounts

A \$50.00 late fee is applied if tuition is not paid on time. Families may apply for a one-time waiver if needed and tuition must be brought up to date within two weeks. After two weeks, if tuition is not rectified, the student will be un-enrolled at LHM.

A \$25.00 charge is assessed for any check returned to the school due to insufficient funds. Parents will be notified if a check is returned, and future payments must be made by cash, cashier's check or money order.

Fees for Late Pick-up

Following Morning Dismissal

If a half-day child has not been picked up by 12:15 P.M. parents will be charged a \$10.00 fee. An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any child remaining at school past 12:15 P.M.

Following Afternoon Dismissal

If a full day student has not been picked up by the end of the 3:15 P.M. dismissal, parents will be charged a \$10.00 fee. An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any child remaining at school past 3:15 P.M.

Parent-School Partnership Agreement

Parents/guardians are expected to volunteer and/or participate in fundraisers throughout the year for a total of 10 volunteer hours per family. We encourage all parents to play an active role in supporting the school, but we also realize this is not an option for some. If you are unable to volunteer or fundraise, you may opt to pay a fee of \$100 per semester in lieu of participating.

Discounts

Early Payment Discount: Tuition that is paid in full by August 1, 2024 will receive a 5% discount.

Sibling Discount: The oldest child of each family is considered the first child in the family. Additional siblings receive a 10% tuition discount up to the 4th child.

Cornerstone Church Member Discount: Once verified, an additional 10% discount will be given to active church members of Cornerstone Church. Church membership verification will be required quarterly to qualify for the discount.

Pastoral Discount: Tuition discounts are offered for full-time Senior Pastors, who are the primary income providers in their household. When applying, please notify the principal of your Pastoral status. A confirmation letter from your church will be required and verified each year.

Active Military Personnel Discount: A discount is offered for families with a parent who is full-time active military personnel. When applying, notify our Admission Director of your military status. Confirmation will be required and verified each year.

****Limitation of Discounts** – Discounts cannot exceed 20% of the standard tuition for any given child or family.

Tuition Work Credit: We also have a Tuition Work Credit Program (TWC) available for a limited number of families who may need assistance with their tuition. Tuition work credit allows school families to perform cleaning, maintenance, and extracurricular services at the school in exchange for a discount on tuition. Tuition work credit duties are performed on a weekly basis throughout the school year, and special projects may be assigned over the summer.

For more information about the TWC Program or to request a TWC application, please contact our office at admin@livinghopemontessori.net.

Section III – Parent Involvement and Communication

First Day of School

Discuss school with your child, particularly during the week before it begins. Emphasize the positive aspects of school and express how proud you are that your child is ready for this step. Some children's first experiences at school can be frightening. If you are anxious, your child may sense this. Encourage your child to look forward to the wonderful opportunity he or she is about to enjoy.

Some children, especially those who are attending school for the first time, may cry the first few days. A quick separation works best, and your cooperation will be needed to achieve this. If your child cries when you bring him or her to school, please say a quick good-bye and assure your child that you will return later. Maintain a cheerful, positive attitude about school and leave after saying "goodbye". The teachers have been trained to handle such situations. If you remain uneasy after you leave, please call the school/principal.

Parent Observations

If you would like to schedule an observation, you may contact the school to set up an observation time. All parent observations must be scheduled in advance. Parents will be provided with an observation sheet to complete to guide them in understanding what they should be looking for in a Montessori classroom.

Communicating with Teacher and Staff

Short notes, emails, and phone calls are welcome and will often clarify questions that you or your child may have.

Please keep the teacher informed of any changes in your child's routine or behavior that might affect him or her at school.

Student Assessment

Parents will be given quarterly scholastic progress reports/summaries for their children.

While standardized testing is not a typical part of the Montessori environment, parents of students ages 8 and up are given the option for their child to be administered standardized testing to obtain a continuous and objective evaluation of student growth and to maintain curriculum alignment to meet state standards. If you prefer for your child to take state standardized testing, please contact your public school district. **If you would like for your child to take a standardized test in the spring, please notify the principal by September 30th. The standardized testing fee is \$50 per student and will be due by March 1st.**

Visitors-Volunteers

Studies have shown that children whose parents regularly participate in their child's educational process have greater academic success. Our school encourages parents to volunteer in the school's academic programs by sharing skills or experiences with the classes. You may choose to make a presentation to your child's class only, or to all of the classes. Parents also regularly participate by listening to children read, assisting in preparing classroom materials, and performing odd jobs around the school. Involvement as volunteers greatly enhances the goals of the school.

Donations

Living Hope Montessori is a ministry of Cornerstone Church which is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation; therefore, donations and grants are an important source of revenue for the school. All monetary donations made to the church in support of the school are tax-deductible.

Transportation

Parents must provide transportation for their children.

Section IV – Policies & Procedures

Arrival

The doors of the school open for students at 7:45 A.M. Please park your vehicle and walk your child to the building. Students will enter the common area to hang up their belongings, change

into their indoor shoes, and immediately wash their hands prior to entering the classroom. Roll is taken at 8:00 A.M.; students arriving after this time will be marked tardy. **Students who arrive after 9:00 A.M. are marked absent.**

Dismissal

For the safety of the entire school community, drivers should not be using cell phones on the school property during morning drop-off or afternoon pick up procedures.

Please observe the following dismissal procedures and times:

Half Day Student Dismissal: 11:50-12:00 P.M. Parents should park their cars and wait by the school door for the staff member to dismiss students. The staff member will dismiss students one at a time. Identification will be checked and permission to release forms will be verified for students who are not picked up by their parents.

Afternoon Dismissal: 3:00 P.M. - 3:15 P.M.

Parents should park their cars and wait by the school door for staff members to dismiss students. Staff members will dismiss students one at a time. Identification will be checked and permission to release forms will be verified for students who are not picked up by their parents.

Attendance

The doors of the school open for students at 7:45 A.M. Please park your vehicle and walk your child to the school door. Students will enter the common area to hang up their belongings, change into their indoor shoes, and immediately wash their hands prior to entering the classroom. Roll is taken at 8:00 A.M.; students arriving after this time will be marked tardy. **Students who arrive after 9:00 A.M. are marked absent.**

Absences: Parents are encouraged to bring their children to school on time. When children are brought in late for class, they interrupt the learning process for other students and interrupt the teaching process for teachers. Parents of students who are not at school by 8:00 A.M. are required to sign the Tardy Logbook. All students who are habitually tardy, beyond 7 times in a progress reporting period, will be reported to truancy authorities.

The Louisiana Compulsory School Attendance Law, R. S. 17:221, mandates that all children residing in the State of Louisiana between the ages of seven and eighteen must be enrolled in a public or private day school. The State Compulsory Attendance law also applies to any child below the age of seven who legally enrolls in school. In addition, state and local attendance policies require students in grades one through eight to be in attendance one hundred sixty (160) days of the school year in order to receive credit for the year's work. Any child below the age of seven who legally enrolls in school shall also be subject to the provisions of this Subpart.

LHM is mandated by state law to enforce the compulsory school attendance law and will report excessive absences to the proper authority. Any student who exceeds 5 unexcused absences in an

academic year will receive written notification from the principal and a conference is required. When absenteeism reaches the 5-day mark, the parent will receive written notification and documentation will be sent to proper truancy authority.

Tardies: A late arrival/tardy is arriving more than 5 minutes after the scheduled arrival time. Students arriving after this time cause disruption to the morning work cycle. Any student arriving late must be brought to the office by the adult dropping them off and must be signed in. Students with excessive tardies will require a meeting with administrators.

Signing Out

Under no circumstances should a child leave the building without prior approval from his/her parent and teacher. If a child must leave school at a time other than the scheduled dismissal time, please notify the school and proceed as follows:

1. Wait in the common area and complete the requested information on the sign-out sheet while a staff member calls your child from class.
2. The staff member will inform the classroom teacher that the child is leaving and whether he will return to class that day.
3. A parent must provide written permission for a child to leave school with any person not listed on the current Student Dismissal Form. **The person picking up the child must present a picture ID and a valid driver's license.** Non-family members picking up the child must be at least 18 years old.

Lunch

Lunch should arrive with your child.

Each full-day student must bring a packed lunch from home. The lunch box should be clearly marked with his/her name. Lunches should be self-contained, having utensils or paper plates included, if needed. Use thermal containers or cold packs when appropriate, since health regulations prohibit the school from storing food in the refrigerator or freezer for students.

Food items should be fully prepared and ready for eating at school. For example, cut whole fruits into pieces if your child prefers smaller portions. Grapes must be halved or quartered. Microwaves are available to heat any food that requires warming. Food should be "ready to eat" and require one minute or less to heat.

LHM encourages healthy snacks and meals for your child. Good nutrition is a concern since it affects the children's ability to learn as well as their mental and physical health. Children are given the opportunity to eat lunch at an appropriate time. Please include a protein source. **They are encouraged to eat the protein and fruits from their lunches before eating sweets.** **Candy, gum, carbonated or sugar-filled drinks, and other unhealthy choices should not be included in a lunch brought to school.** Students may only bring clear drinks. **These will be**

returned in the child's lunch box. Water will be provided for the child if a drink is not provided.

Young children can gain independence by learning what a balanced lunch consists of and helping to prepare it. Allow your child help with his or her lunch.

Note: Lunch boxes are sometimes used as a means to send notes home from school, especially for Toddler and Primary children (ages 2-6). Check your child's lunchbox on a daily basis for notes.

Birthdays

We will honor the child on their birthday through our birthday tradition "Walk Around the Sun". If parents would like to provide a healthy snack for their child's class to celebrate his/her birthday, arrangements can be made with the child's teacher. Examples of acceptable snacks include 100% fruit juice popsicles, fruit platters, rice krispie treats, and juice boxes.

If you are hosting a birthday party or other party away from school, **you may send invitations to be distributed at school only if all of the students in your child's classroom are being invited.**

Holiday Celebrations

Holiday Celebrations will be conducted in a manner conducive to the Montessori classroom environment. We celebrate holidays that are in alignment with the biblical values we teach. For the holidays we celebrate, we will design projects and activities that give the child more experience with the understanding of the holiday.

Outdoor Policy

Outdoor play is important to all developmental domains of development, particularly physical gross motor development. Children will be provided with at least one hour a day of outside time, weather permitting. Please dress your child appropriately for outdoor play during the cold weather.

Should the weather prevent us from taking the children outdoors, we will provide alternate indoor movement activities (playroom). Outdoor play restrictions for a child must be in writing and accompanied by a doctor's medical statement noting the reason for the restriction.

Change of Clothes

Please bring a complete change of clothes for him/ her on or before the first day of school. Place the clothes in a large zipper lock bag labeled with your child's name and label each individual item of clothing as well. This clothing will be stored at school. **Please immediately replace any clothes that are sent home.** If your child does not have his own clothes, parents will be notified and will be asked to bring extra clothing. Appropriate clothes should be provided for seasonal changes, also.

Remember:

1. **Mark all clothing items (sweaters, jackets, coats, caps, gloves, and socks) with your child's name.**
2. **Please send your child to school in shoes that will be appropriate for outside play.**
3. **Clothing should have no disrespectful illustrations, messages, or slogans.**

School Media Policy

Parents are asked to sign a consent for photographs, video, and/or audio that may be used in print or social media to share school happenings. Students in the elementary classrooms may use a computer from time to time to conduct research projects only with written/signed parent permission.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the Montessori education experience. Below are the guidelines for field trips:

- A signed 'Field Trip Permission Form' must be on file in the office in order for children to participate.
- Parents are given a written notice of upcoming field trips. **Please note that class work must be current. Students with behavior referrals within the last 2 weeks will not be allowed to attend field trips.**
- Volunteer drivers must sign a 'Field Trip Driver Form' and supply a copy of the requested documents to the office.
- All passengers must wear securely fitting seat belts or use car seats/booster seats if needed.
- Children are not allowed to ride in the front seat of a vehicle.
- Children are not allowed to ride in the back of a pickup truck for school sponsored trips.

Illness and General Health

Should your child become ill at school, your child will be isolated from other children and parents are contacted. Please make sure the persons and phone numbers listed FOR EMERGENCIES are current. It is imperative that parents respond quickly to incidents of illness.

A child who develops any of the following symptoms must be picked up from school:

- Fever
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Red or sore throat
- Severe common cold
- Croup
- Excessive coughing
- Conjunctivitis (pinkeye) or other eye infection
- Any skin infection, such as boils, ringworm, impetigo, or unexplained rash.
- Any symptom of a childhood disease, (i.e. scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox)
- Any lice or nits

A child must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea as well as the symptoms listed above (without being given medications), for at least 24 hours before returning to school. He/she must also be sufficiently recovered to be able to go outside at recess. Doctor's excuses must be submitted within 5 days for medical related absences to be voided.

When your child is sick at home, please notify the school office so that the teachers can be made aware of the reason for the absence.

Medication is not dispensed at school.

A **minor injury** at school will be attended to by a staff member. In the event of a serious illness or injury warranting professional care, parents will be called immediately. If we cannot contact the parent, the person listed as the emergency contact will be called. Please keep this information updated. 911 will be called if conditions warrant.

Head lice are small, wingless, grayish-tan insects that cannot survive without being on a human host. They are passed from person to person by direct contact or on shared objects such as hats, combs, towels, barrettes, headphones, etc. For this reason, please encourage your child to keep these personal items only for their own use. If a child at school is discovered to have head lice, parents will be informed immediately. The child **must go home** and not return to school until he/she is free of lice and nits.

Upon returning to school, the parent is to remain at school with the child until the classroom teacher checks the child's hair to confirm that he/she is nit-free.

Sunscreen, insect repellent, and lip balm policy

Prior to use at school sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm cream be applied to the child at least once at home to test for any allergic reaction. Parents have to provide permission slip with date, child's name, parent's name and signature, before either is used. Please label above these with your child's full name for identification

Safety and Security

Locked Doors – Exterior doors are locked at all times (except during morning arrival when staff is present). If you need to enter the building during the school day, please ring the doorbell and a staff member will unlock it for you. All parents/guardians and guests entering and exiting the building are asked to use the front doors.

SEVERE WEATHER ALERT

If weather conditions are so severe that school closure becomes necessary, parents will be notified via phone, text, and/or on our Facebook page. In the event that closure is required during the school day and students need to leave school early, this information will be announced via phone, text, or on our Facebook page. When a scheduled event is called off, every attempt will be made to inform parents in a timely manner.

SECTION IV -DISCIPLINE

Complaint/Grievance Procedures

When a parent has a question or concern regarding his/her child's teacher, the first step to resolution is contact with that teacher by phone, letter, or an arranged conference. If further assistance is required, contact the principal.

If resolution cannot be accomplished through the principal, the complainant shall make his/her complaint in writing directly to the Board. The President of the Board shall, in a timely manner, conduct an investigation of the complaint. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the Board shall make a written recommendation to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, the Board will meet with all parties to review the complaint. Following these procedures will greatly enhance quick resolution to problems and concerns.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Montessori Approach to Student Behavior

Discipline vs. Self-Control – To discipline means “to educate” or “to train.” However, in many settings the phrase most often used to describe discipline is “to punish.” LHM seeks to minimize teacher-imposed control by facilitating the growth of self-discipline, which is developed by the child himself or herself as he or she completes school lessons.

Freedom to Do What's Right – The ultimate goal of discipline is developing self-control within the student in preparation for a successful adult life. This thought process is often referred to as “freedom within limits” in the Montessori environment. With this freedom also comes responsibility. Dr. Maria Montessori is quoted as saying, “**Children always have the freedom to do what is right. They never have the freedom to do what is wrong.**”

Making Appropriate Choices – This concept is the guiding principle for discipline within a Montessori classroom. There are many choices that children can make that are right and appropriate. However, if they make a wrong choice, it will always have a consequence that comes with it. LHM is committed to creating an environment in which learning is a rewarding experience for all students. LHM will create a learning environment where independence flourishes, where students are safe in all respects, and where distractions to learning and development are minimized for all students.

Clear Rules and Expectations – There are some misconceptions with regards to discipline in a Montessori classroom which include the impression that Montessori is completely permissive when it comes to discipline which is completely not true. The school's ground rules are always communicated to students at the beginning of the year. Classroom rules are clearly posted in

each room and the staff consistently and continually reinforce necessary adherence to these rules. The purpose of ground rules is to aid in the development of self-respect, respect for others, and respect for the environment.

Behavioral Guidelines

Behavior Expectations

- **Be Respectful**
- **Be Responsible**
- **Make Good Choices**
- **Be Safe**
- **Be a Willing Learner**

General Playground Expectations

Children will be supervised on the playground and the nature trail at all times. The children will follow the instructions of the adult in charge, as well as all safety rules of the playground.

- Rough play is not allowed. Rough play includes hitting, pinching or biting, pretend gunplay or swordplay, karate moves, etc.
- Throw all litter in the garbage bins.
- Children must properly store play equipment after use.
- Equipment should be used for the designated purpose only.

Stages of Self-Discipline

Children move through three stages before achieving true self-discipline:

1. Children are reliant on external control (from adults).
2. Children still need some external control (simple body language from an adult) but are actively developing self-discipline.
3. Children are no longer dependent on external controls

Self-Discipline

Parents and teachers alike know that a child watches everything in order to learn. When a child is in class, he or she will watch others very carefully to learn the behavioral expectations, the rules and exceptions of any environment. Every adult at Living Hope Montessori strives to model the same behaviors we ask of the children.

Behavioral management is used when a child needs external discipline and has not yet developed self-control, self-esteem, or respect for others (self-discipline). LHM provides positive guidance, verbal redirection, clear limits and high but appropriate expectations for behaviors. A child may

be asked to take a time out (for no longer than their age- i.e. 3 years old, 3 minutes) and to sit in a chair within the classroom, or to stay very close to the teacher while (s)he gives lessons or moves about the classroom. On occasion a child may be asked to wait in the office until he or she is ready to rejoin the classroom. The child shall decide when they are ready to rejoin the group. Teachers are trained to redirect children and to show kindness, calmness and respect, even when a child makes a mistake.

Child Who Struggles

- Children in Montessori programs are usually calmer and more peaceful than many programs, but occasionally there may be a child who struggles with these behaviors.
- If for any reason, the external discipline LHM offers is not beneficial or meaningful for a child, LHM will begin to identify and document the behavioral concerns.
- If a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, the parents/guardians will be asked to take their child home for the rest of the day.
- On rare occasions, the parents/guardians and school may determine that LHM is not the best match for a child.
- If a child's teacher observes the following behavioral patterns past the six-week normalization period, he or she will contact parents in order to begin a meaningful conversation on how best to support the child.
 - Behaviors that cause a child to fail in areas that he or she wants to succeed in
 - Behaviors that frustrate a child's ability to progress through the intellectual, social, and academic curricula
 - Repeated physical aggression or verbal aggression towards others or self
 - Repeated disruption of school activities
 - A pattern of noncompliance with reasonable and beneficial direction/instruction from teachers
 - Behaviors that prevent the staff's ability to care for the safety and well-being of the child or other children in the group

Procedure for Redirectable Behaviors: (All Programs)

Inappropriate behaviors that are considered redirectable or “teachable moments” by staff (and do not involve physical contact with another student, but can still develop into disruptive situations for the classroom community) will be addressed as follows:

1. The teacher will start by redirecting the student and helping him/her get engaged in work. The teacher will continue with this step if positive progress is being made.
2. If the student is not responding positively to redirection by the teacher, the teacher will help the student find a place in the classroom to calm his/her body and observe the rest of the class and reflect on his/her behavior. The teacher will continue with this step if positive changes are being observed. (At this step, verbal communication with parents is recommended.)
3. If the student is not responding positively to redirection or reflection time, the teacher will complete a written referral and refer the child to administration. (Written documentation to parents required at this step.)
4. If the student reaches step 3 twice in one day, the child will be excused from school for the remainder of the day. (Written documentation to parents required at this step.)
5. If a child receives 5 written referrals, the student will be excused from school (suspension) until a meeting can be held between the lead teacher, the parents, and the administrator. At this time a behavioral action plan will be presented and discussed. (Written documentation to parents required at this step.)
6. If step 5 (suspension and behavior plan implementation) is not successful and behaviors continue, a meeting will be held by the teacher and administrator with the parents to determine if LHM is the appropriate environment for the student.

Behavioral Action Plans:

If a student has a documented history of five written referral offenses (for either redirectable or aggressive behaviors), it is the responsibility of the lead teacher to write and implement a behavioral action plan to share with parents before the student returns to class. The principal must also be present at this meeting. The goal of the behavioral action plan is to observe, explore, and document whether accommodations/ modifications in the current classroom environment will be enough to help the student be a positive and contributing member of the class. Behavioral action plans will be given a four-week period of implementation. (During this period of implementation, the normal behavioral consequences as outlined above will continue to be followed.) If at the conclusion of the four-week period the teacher observes positive change being made, s/he may choose to adjust the current behavioral action plan and allow for another four-week period of implementation. If minimal or no positive change is being observed, the lead teacher and principal will make a decision as to whether LHM is an appropriate environment for this student.

PARENT CONDUCT POLICY

Living Hope Montessori is responsible for protecting the children in our care, and for providing a safe workplace for staff members. Therefore, it is imperative that parents conduct themselves in a professional and rational manner on school property, at school functions, or while communicating with school staff.

LHM reserves the right to dismiss a child or children from school if the parent behaves inappropriately. Behaviors that are grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Acts of violence, including assault and battery
- Verbal abuse, harassment of, or threats against the staff, other parents, or children
- Possession of illegal substances or firearms on campus
- Verbal or physical abuse of any child
- Profanity
- Indecent exposure

Bullying Policy

Living Hope Montessori expects all students and adults to treat each other with grace, courtesy and respect. Every person in the school environment has the right to a safe, peaceful environment free of bullying behavior.

Bullying may be defined as repeated, targeted aggression conducted by an individual (aggressor) or a group (aggressors) against other(s) (targets). It is unwarranted and purposeful written, verbal, non-verbal, electronic or physical behavior (act or gesture) that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.

As educators, we recognize that conflict, and learning to resolve conflict, is a natural part of social growth. Montessori training equips our teachers with tools for presenting conflict resolution techniques. Teachers mediate conflicts between children, helping the students use appropriate communication to resolve conflicts. Should a pattern of conflict between students arise that meets the definition of bullying, the principal will be notified immediately.

Upon notification of a bullying incident, the principal will meet with both the aggressor(s) and the target of the incident. As is appropriate in a school serving children as young as 3 years old, incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children involved. Parents of both aggressor(s) and the target will be informed by phone of the incident immediately. Written notification of the incident and an action plan to prevent

future bullying will be presented to all parties (parents, and students if age appropriate) for signature.

Repeated bullying, or refusal to participate in an action plan to resolve conflict and prevent bullying, may be grounds for dismissal from Living Hope Montessori.

General Campus Rules

Smoking & Controlled Substances

Smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or using any controlled substance on campus at school activities or on school sponsored trips by students, staff, parents, or visitors is prohibited.

Weapons on School Grounds

Louisiana Law prohibits the possession of firearms or dangerous weapons on a school campus. S§95.2.

A. Carrying a firearm, or dangerous weapon as defined in R.S. 14:2, by a student or nonstudent on school property, at a school sponsored function, or in a firearm-free zone is unlawful and shall be defined as possession of any firearm or dangerous weapon, on one's person, at any time while on a school campus, on school transportation, or at any school sponsored function in a specific designated area including but not limited to athletic competitions, dances, parties, or any extracurricular activities, or within one thousand feet of any school campus.

Games and Electronic Devices

Computer games, tablets, handheld video game devices, or cell phones are not permitted to be used on the school campus by students.

Phone Usage

Children will not be called from class to accept phone calls unless there is a family emergency. Office staff will be happy to take and give messages as needed. Students will not be allowed to make phone calls unless previously arranged by parent or approved by a staff member

Dress code

Although the school does not require uniforms, appropriate clothing (practical, comfortable, and manageable for the child's age) is required. Do not send your child in his/her best clothing, as it may restrict him/her from participating in classroom activities. Girls should wear shorts (can be biking type shorts) under dresses or skirts. Halter tops should not be worn. Shorts and skirts should be acceptable length (at least finger-tip length).

Students must have a pair of “inside” shoes and rubber boots to leave at school. Inside shoes should be soft-soled and easy to slip on and off (croc type shoes seem to work best).

Please help your children choose clothing they are able to manage with little or no assistance. Please be sure clothing is appropriate for the weather conditions. Wearing layers of clothing helps children adjust their attire to their personal needs when the temperature changes during the day.

SECTION V - MONTESSORI AT HOME

Your Child’s Room

Many parents have adopted the idea of low shelves with a few, well-chosen items found in the Montessori classroom environment for their child's room at home. They also apply classroom rules that permit using only one material at a time, and that each material be replaced, as it was, before taking another. Providing this consistency between school and home gives the child a sense of security and stresses responsibility and neatness at home at an early age.

In the Kitchen

Consider a safe step stool that would allow a young child access to dish washing and food prep. Allow the child to assist in preparing meals for home and involve them in packing their own lunch. Use child-sized pitchers and utensils; fill pitchers with enough water or juice to ensure pouring success.

Living Room

Each room of the home should include a few of the child’s belongings so that he or she might feel a sense of belonging. Carefully choose items to be placed deliberately in the environment, so that they might be cared for and respected by the child. A couple of puzzles/games near the coffee table, child-sized seating, and a designated place for leisurely reading are just a few ideas.

Bathroom

Allow the child safe access to the bathroom – a stool and a toilet-seat ring easily make the large, adult-sized toilet fit little ones. An accessible shelf prepared with self-care items such as a comb and toothbrush, perhaps a low mirror, help the child feel independent.

Outside Space

Child-sized outdoor furniture and an area for safe exploration are key. Involve the child in regular outdoor activities and chores such as sweeping, washing the car, and watering/tending the garden.

Parent Handbook Agreement Form

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the parent handbook. Furthermore, I have reviewed the policies and procedures stated in the guide. I understand that Living Hope Montessori reserves the right to adjust policies/information as deemed necessary and that I will be notified when those updates are made. I agree to cooperate with and abide by these policies and procedures as they pertain to my child's care at school. I further understand that any repeated instances of noncompliance to these policies may lead to the dismissal of my child.

Tuition/Late Fees:

Tuition is due on the first day of each month (August-May). A late charge of \$50.00 is due if payment is more than 1 day overdue. Families may apply for a one-time waiver if needed and tuition must be received by the 15th of the month. If payment is not received by the date set on the one-time waiver or subsequently on the first of the month, the student will not be allowed to return to school until payment is up-to-date.

Registration fees are due June 5th or upon the child's official enrollment. These fees secure your child's spot in the class. Workbook/Technology fees are due by June 5th or upon enrollment for students in the Elementary Program.

Dismissal is at 3:00 daily. Students who are picked up after 3:15 will be charged a late pickup fee of \$10 plus \$1 per each additional minute late.

I understand that if my child's fees and tuition payments are not up-to-date my child will be unable to attend until payment is made.

The parties hereto agree that if ever there comes a time that collection of fees/tuition or other items must to be litigated, any costs of such proceedings will be assessed to you, including reasonable attorney's fees, costs of court and judicial interest thereon from the time of demand.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

Signature of Principal or

Date

Authorized Representative